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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH PIERRE SALINGER

OCTOBER 24, 1962

4:10 P.M. EDT

WEDNESDAY

MR. SALINGER: I would like to go on BACKGROUND

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at the start of this conference. As you know, I met yesterday with the heads of the two major American wire services, plus the heads of the three networks to discuss with them the subject of national security information. The discussion was directed at the current situation, the current international situation, and referred principally to items of news which we consider, or the publication of which we consider not to be in the national interest at this time.

The Defense Department has issued a directive to its commands which spells out the types of information that they are not to give out.

Q. Issued when?

MR. SALINGER: It was issued at four o'clock this afternoon. We will give you in the next ten minutes a memorandum to editors and radio and television news directors which will tell you what that information is, for your information, which will contain a request from the White House to exercise caution and discretion in the printing of such information, and which will provide newspapers around the country with a point to which they can call should they want to ascertain whether certain information they have in their possession comes under the purview of this memorandum.

As the memorandum makes clear, this is not a binding matter on editors. In other words, they can either take our advice or reject it as they see fit, but it was felt that if the editors had in front of them a memorandum of the categories of information which we consider to be not in the national interest to print at this time, it would be helpful to them in making these judgments that we ask them to make.

Q. Is this merely for information and not for publication?

Q. Were the five gentlemen who were in there yesterday, were they in agreement with this policy?

MR. SALINGER: The gentlemen, I cannot speak about their agreement with the policy. The gentlemen who were in here yesterday said that they would certainly transmit such a memorandum to their members. Now, they are in a position, as Mrs. McClendon's question this morning made amply clear, of not being able to speak for their member newspapers. It is up to each individual newspaper what they did with this memorandum.

Q. How does this affect certain foreign newspapers and news agencies?

MR. SALINGER: Well, that is an excellent question, and following the publication of this memorandum which we are now giving to American newspapers first, since they are the primary association we have, with American newspapers, we will then talk to and have conferences with similar organizations of foreign newsmen and give them the same guidance.

Since however this is not a binding thing on anyone, this becomes a matter of discretion. In other words, this is not censorship, a censorship plan, it is not even a voluntary censorship plan, because we have indicated in the past even to invoke voluntary censorship at this time would be unfeasible because it would require us to impose a total censorship plan at the water line or at the borders of the United States, on news going overseas.

Q. Can this be quoted?

MR. SALINGER: It is all for background.

Q. Do you feel there have been breaches of discretion in the past week?

MR. SALINGER: I do.

Q. Mr. Salinger, who is the man or the office that questions will be directed to?

MR. SALINGER: The News Office of the Defense Department. Now, this is primarily, this service, although this service is available to people in Washington, this service is primarily for those outside of Washington who do not have daily access to people in the information field in the government. This is not to say, however, that any of you who cover the White House on a regular basis or any of the people who cover the Defense Department on a regular basis, since most of this is defense material, do not have or cannot talk to anyone of us in the information field and ask us what we feel about a certain item although

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Q. Is this merely for information and not for publication?

MR. SALINGER: No, you are perfectly entitled to publish it if you wish.

Q. This is important enough so that it ought to be attributed to somebody.

MR. SALINGER: It is attributed to the White House and it says so in the memorandum.

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Q. Pierre, on this last question, to clear it up here, I assume this can be quoted as coming from a White House official, and not from you -- everything you have been saying here.

MR. SALINGER: That is correct.

Q. What was that? I didn't get the question.

MR. SALINGER: I said that could be attributed to a White House official but not to me personally, what I have said. The statement itself is not quotable exactly as it is spelled out.

Q. Without naming any names, can you give us some examples of what you think have passed the boundary, so we will have some idea?

MR. SALINGER: Of course, the memorandum is very specific about the types of news we are talking about, but I can give you a couple of examples.

Q. In the memorandum or what has happened?

MR. SALINGER: From what has happened. We had, for example, the television broadcast yesterday where a news broadcaster was interviewing a woman who had just left Guantanamo, one of the people evacuated, in which the questions were directed solely to how many ships were in the harbor, how many troops had moved into Guantanamo in the last 48 hours, and that kind of thing. That whole interview was on that, on those facts, which are as you will see in the memorandum, troop movements, ship movements and so on. Those are the kind of things that we are asking not to be published.

Q. Was that a network show or a local?

MR. SALINGER: It was a network show.

Q. Pierre, how do you propose to get the cooperation of the Russian reporters with this?

MR. SALINGER: Well, I would think in the interests of American national security that we would have some desire on the part of American newspapers to assist in this program. Obviously, Russian reporters are going to print anything they can get their hands on. But a lot of the stuff they print, they read in American newspapers and if they are not reading it in the American newspapers, it makes it a little more difficult for them to get it.

Q. Are you going to talk with them, though?

MR. SALINGER: Am I going to talk to the Russian reporters? I think that would be somewhat of a useless exercise, no.

Q. When do you propose to have your conferences with the foreign press?

Q. Pierre, on this subject of Monday, the New York Times carried a report that the White House had requested certain newspapers, and they didn't specify which ones, to withhold information about the government's intended action in the Cuban crisis, and that the papers withheld it at their request. Can you say whether that is true or not.

MR. SALINGER: That is true.

Q. You say it is true?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, sir.

Q. What was that again?

Q. What is true?

MR. SALINGER: Just to make it again amply clear, anything that I have said over and above the memorandum itself is for BACKGROUND.

It is true that as the New York Times printed it, several newspapers were asked by the White House not to publish an advance information that they had on what the President intended to do and say on Monday night.

Q. Were they given information in advance?

MR. SALINGER: Neither paper had the entire story, but they had a piece of it.

Q. You said "neither paper"?

MR. SALINGER: There were two papers involved.

Q. Can you stop these kinds of leaks out of the government then?

MR. SALINGER: Mr. Knighten, as I said just a minute ago, the memorandum to all of these stations went out at four o'clock, and it is a very tough memorandum on the information, and we are going to do everything we can within the government not to give you the information in the first place. But there are a lot of bases, for example, which are wide open as far as being able to see what is going on, where no matter of security unless you are just going to clear everybody out for twenty miles around, is going to prevent newspapers from finding out, particularly local newspapers, movements of troops and ships.

Q. Isn't this very close to the World War II voluntary censorship?

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Q. When do you propose to have your conferences with the foreign press?

MR. SALINGER: Within the next 24 hours.

Q. Did you call in the wire services and the networks?

MR. SALINGER: I did.

Q. Did you initially?

MR. SALINGER: I did.

MR. SALINGER: That is true.

Q. You say it is true?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, sir.

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Q. Isn't this very close to the World War II voluntary censorship?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir; it is not at all. This is up to the newspapers themselves.

Q. That was, too.

Q. How did you know which papers to call, to ask not to print these stories?

MR. SALINGER: Well, it was pretty easy. They

called us and told us that they had the information.

Q. They called you and told you that they had the information coming out, and asked you if they could go ahead and print it?

MR. SALINGER: No, they wanted to get confirmation of the information, and I am not saying that they called me, but they called people in the government.

Q. That was a big mistake.

MR. SALINGER: It was a mistake that you know about.

Q. Are any steps being taken to stop civilian leaks? And that is what Knighten asked about.

MR. SALINGER: Absolutely. When you talk about civilian leaks, you are talking about people walking down the street and seeing something and running to a newspaper office.

Q. Like this, someone telling the Herald Tribune, or whoever they told.

MR. SALINGER: Within the government, absolutely.

Q. What steps?

Q. Absolutely what?

MR. SALINGER: As you saw during the five days that preceded the President's speech, there were very stringent efforts made to prevent advance warning of what the President was going to do, very, very good reasons.

Q. But still there were two papers.

Q. Were they asking for voluntary censorship when they told you that they had this?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. I thought you said you asked them not to issue it.

MR. SALINGER: We asked them in the national interest, and they decided in their own interest not to use it, and there is no compulsion involved here.

Q. It is a voluntary censorship?

MR. SALINGER: It is not voluntary censorship.

into these points?

MR. SALINGER: No. There are certain correspondents of certain nations who are not permitted to go into certain areas already by interdiction. In other words, we have certain areas where certain correspondents of certain countries cannot go. They will not be permitted to go into those areas. They are not permitted to go out of certain areas even in ordinary times.

But the correspondents of friendly countries have long been permitted to go anywhere they want to in the country, and we have no plans to change that.

Q. There is no special screening of new applicants or anything like that?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Pierre, so there is no misunderstanding, everything you have been saying can be put into quotes as coming from the White House official?

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't say in quotes, no. As BACKGROUND and not in quotes.

Q. Not in quotes?

MR. SALINGER: That is correct.

Q. Can you give this program a name?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Has it any precedents?

MR. SALINGER: I am not aware of any.

Q. How about the Salinger Doctrine?

Q. Has the President received a note from Chairman Khrushchev?

MR. SALINGER: He has not.

Q. Wait a minute, you said that nothing had come in?

MR. SALINGER: I said that, yes, sir. I did, very flatly.

Q. No notes from Khrushchev?

MR. SALINGER: Or message.

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MR. SALINGER: We asked them in the national interest, and they decided in their own interest not to use it, and there is no compulsion involved here.

Q. It is a voluntary censorship?

MR. SALINGER: It is not voluntary censorship. Voluntary censorship goes a great deal further.

Q. How?

MR. SALINGER: If we get into that situation, you will find out.

Q. Are any steps being taken to screen in a greater way the correspondents from the foreign countries and others who are asking for clearance into Florida and

areas even in ordinary times.

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Q. No notes from Khrushchev?

MR. SALINGER: Or message.

Q. Of any kind?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Has the President heard of the note to Bertrand Russell?

MR. SALINGER: He has.

Q. Has the President sent a message to Bertrand Russell?

MR. SALINGER: Not that I am aware of.

Q. Has the President given the Russians any grace period or time limit as to when they had to get these offensive type missiles out of Cuba?

MR. SALINGER: I refer you to the speech and the speech was very clear.

Q. Has the President's message to Khrushchev been released?

MR. SALINGER: I don't anticipate it is going to be released.

Q. How did the President become aware of the Khrushchev message to Bertrand Russell?

MR. SALINGER: Through the wire services.

Q. Not through the British Government or anything like that?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir.

Q. Can you give us any reaction of the President to Khrushchev's message to Russell?

MR. SALINGER: No, not now.

Q. There is a report, that is a broadcast report that two Soviet ships were turned back or turned around after encountering the blockade.

MR. SALINGER: I am not in possession of such information.

Q. Can you give us any information as to the status of the blockade, whether any ships have been met by our ships?

MR. SALINGER: When we have some information on that, we will pass it along to you.

Q. Pierre, I understand you to say that there would be something from here before the day is over with respect to Khrushchev.

MR. SALINGER: I didn't say that. I said I couldn't say at this time whether we would respond or have anything to say today or not. But I am not ruling out that we might.

MR. SALINGER: We have had nothing since then.

Q. Was that a statement to the public?

MR. SALINGER: That is correct.

Q. You don't consider that a reply, do you?

MR. SALINGER: There was a private note with that, at that time.

Q. There has been no reply to that, to the private note?

MR. SALINGER: Now, let us get it straight. There was a private note sent to Mr. Khrushchev through Mr. Dobrynin on Monday afternoon. There was a statement and a private note handed to Mr. Kohler yesterday morning.

Q. Was the private note a reply to the private note?

MR. SALINGER: That was.

Q. And it was to President Kennedy from Premier Khrushchev?

MR. SALINGER: That is right, but that was put out by the State Department earlier today.

Q. You mean the note was?

MR. SALINGER: The fact that the note had been sent out was put out earlier today, and what I was directing my answer to was a question, I think Mr. Kilpatrick's question about a new note, because I understood one of the wire services, or one of the networks was carrying a program saying that Mr. Khrushchev had sent a new note to the President on the subject of the ships. We have had no new note from Mr. Khrushchev.

Q. But you have received a letter from Mr. Khrushchev within the last 36 hours?

MR. SALINGER: That one yesterday morning.

Q. Does that indicate that Premier Khrushchev would like to meet with President Kennedy?

MR. SALINGER: I am not prepared to discuss the contents of the note, but OFF THE RECORD

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Q. Khrushchev has not replied to that message from the President?

MR. SALINGER: I didn't say that.

Q. I understood you to say that.

MR. SALINGER: The Soviet Government handed a statement to Mr. Kohler yesterday.

Q. Aside from that?

at that time.

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Q. It does not indicate he would like a summit?

MR. SALINGER: It does not.

Q. Does it deal with that?

MR. SALINGER: It is OFF THE RECORD with that. This particular off the record you can use, but just don't attribute it to anybody.

Q. Does the White House have any comment now on the prospects for a summit meeting in connection with Cuba?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. What is that?

MR. SALINGER: Does the White House have any comment on the prospects for a summit meeting in connection with the Cuban situation, and the answer is "No."

Q. Do you have any list of appointments of the President tomorrow?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir.

Q. Pierre, could we get another list of the Congressmen who are coming in, and was Senator Hayden on the list the other day? He wasn't on it as originally announced.

MR. SALINGER: He got there, though.

Q. He did get there?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, sir.

Q. It is the same list as Monday?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, sir. I will go through it. The Vice President, Senator Mansfield, Senator Humphrey, Senator Fulbright, Senator Russell, Senator Smathers, Senator Hayden, Senator Dirksen, Senator Hickenlooper, Senator Saltonstall, Senator Wiley and Senator Kuechel.

The Speaker, Congressman Albert, Congressman Boggs, Congressman Morgan, Congressman Vincon, Congressman Halleck, Congressman Arends, and Congressman Chiverfield.

Q. Did Arends attend the other one?

MR. SALINGER: I understand that he did.

Q. How many are there on the list, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: Twenty.

Q. Are all of them coming?

MR. SALINGER: That is my understanding. It says, "The following have been invited."

Q. Are they coming in the back way again, and

MR. SALINGER: No, I read on the wires that there are going to be five regional briefings by State and Defense across the country to cover as many Senators and Congressmen as they could.

Q. Can we go back just for a second to this private note that accompanied the statement? Can you say whether there was anything in the private note that gave any more encouragement or departed in any way from the text of the published statement?

MR. SALINGER: Again OFF THE RECORD

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on the same basis as the last off the record statement was made, the private note did not contain anything which was of a different tone or a different nature than the public statement did.

Q. Pierre, on the regional meetings, did the President ask the Defense Department to conduct these?

MR. SALINGER: I can't tell you that.

Q. Who has announced these?

MR. SALINGER: They were on the wires a couple of hours ago.

Q. But you don't know anything about it?

MR. SALINGER: No, I don't, Sarah.

Q. Can you on the same basis on which you have answered the other two questions, tell us whether in the President's note to Mr. Khrushchev there was a suggestion of a meeting with him?

MR. SALINGER: I couldn't tell you that, and I don't believe that there was, no. I couldn't tell you that.

Q. Does the President still plan to go to Brazil?

MR. SALINGER: Well, the answer to that is the same as it was yesterday.

Q. Could you give us any guidance on whether he is likely to go to Brazil after what the Foreign Minister of Brazil said yesterday?

MR. SALINGER: I think the Brazil trip, as well as all of the President's activities this morning...

MR. SALINGER: Does the White House have any comment on the prospects for a summit meeting in connection with the Cuban situation, and the answer is "No."

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Q. Are they coming in the back way again, and going out the back way?

MR. SALINGER: I can't tell you at the moment.

Q. That is 20 including the Vice President?

MR. SALINGER: That is right.

Q. Can you give us any information on a briefing tomorrow for which all of the Senators and Representatives have been summoned?

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Q. But you don't know anything about it?

MR. SALINGER: No, I don't, Sarah.

Q. Can you on the same basis on which you have answered the other two questions, tell us whether in the President's note to Mr. Khrushchev there was a suggestion of a meeting with him?

MR. SALINGER: I couldn't tell you that, and I don't believe that there was, no. I couldn't tell you that.

Q. Does the President still plan to go to Brazil?

MR. SALINGER: Well, the answer to that is the same as it was yesterday.

Q. Could you give us any guidance on whether he is likely to go to Brazil after what the Foreign Minister of Brazil said yesterday?

MR. SALINGER: I think the Brazil trip, as well as all of the President's activities this year, are going to be evaluated in the light of the current situation. Now, there is no present plan to change the trip to Brazil, but I am not ruling out the possibility that something might occur which might force a change.

Q. Do you have anything on the Luxembourg visit?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Who is handling the regional meetings?

MR. SALINGER: State and Defense.

Q. Does the President plan to reply to Bertrand Russell?

MR. SALINGER: I can't tell you that.

Q. Since the quarantine action went into effect this morning, has there been any change in substance in the orders which could relate to this Khrushchev statement?

MR. SALINGER: I am not aware of any.

Q. Will there be any additional briefings, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: I don't know of any.

Q. The present plans are, as you outlined it last night, if there are any ships stopped, the news will come out of the Defense Department?

MR. SALINGER: Yes.

Q. Can you confirm the written report that Cuba has continued its missile build-up even after the President's speech?

MR. SALINGER: I can't answer that question.

Q. Pierre, there was a question here a moment ago about a reply to Bertram Russell. Did the President receive any message from Bertrand Russell?

MR. SALINGER: I don't know whether he did or not. I was unaware of a reply.

Q. Bertrand Russell sent cables to Khrushchev and Kennedy.

Q. You said earlier that a message had been received from Russell.

MR. SALINGER: I didn't say that at all.

Q. Has he received it, you don't know?

MR. SALINGER: I don't know.

Q. Is the President planning to meet as scheduled

MR. SALINGER: I can't tell you that.

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MR. SALINGER: I didn't say that at all.

Q. Has he received it, you don't know?

MR. SALINGER: I don't know.

Q. Is the President planning to meet as scheduled at 10 a.m., with the NSC?

MR. SALINGER: Oh, yes, every morning at ten.

Q. You said that the Brazil trip as well as all of the President's activities will be re-evaluated. What other activities were you referring to?

MR. SALINGER: Well, I mean everything on his calendar. He had no other trips planned that I know of.

Q. Can you find out whether the message has been received from Russell, so it becomes formal?

MR. SALINGER: All right.

Q. I thought the first time you said that the Brazil trip as well as all of his activities were being evaluated.

MR. SALINGER: Re-evaluated.

Q. Thank you, sir.

END